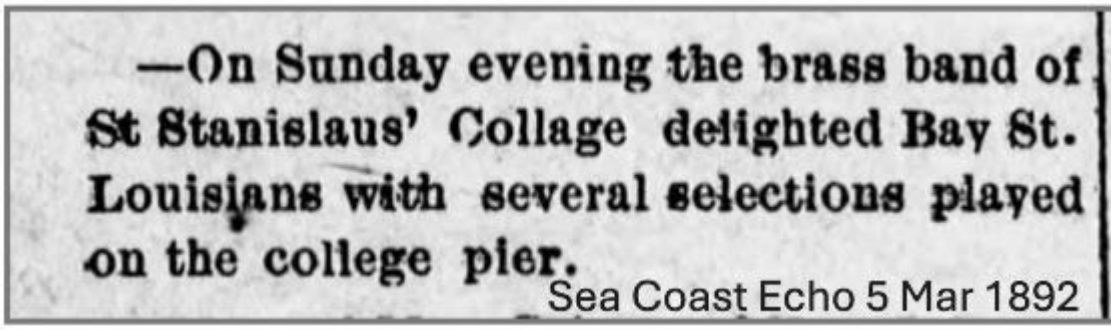
Retro #21 SSC Piers Over the Years

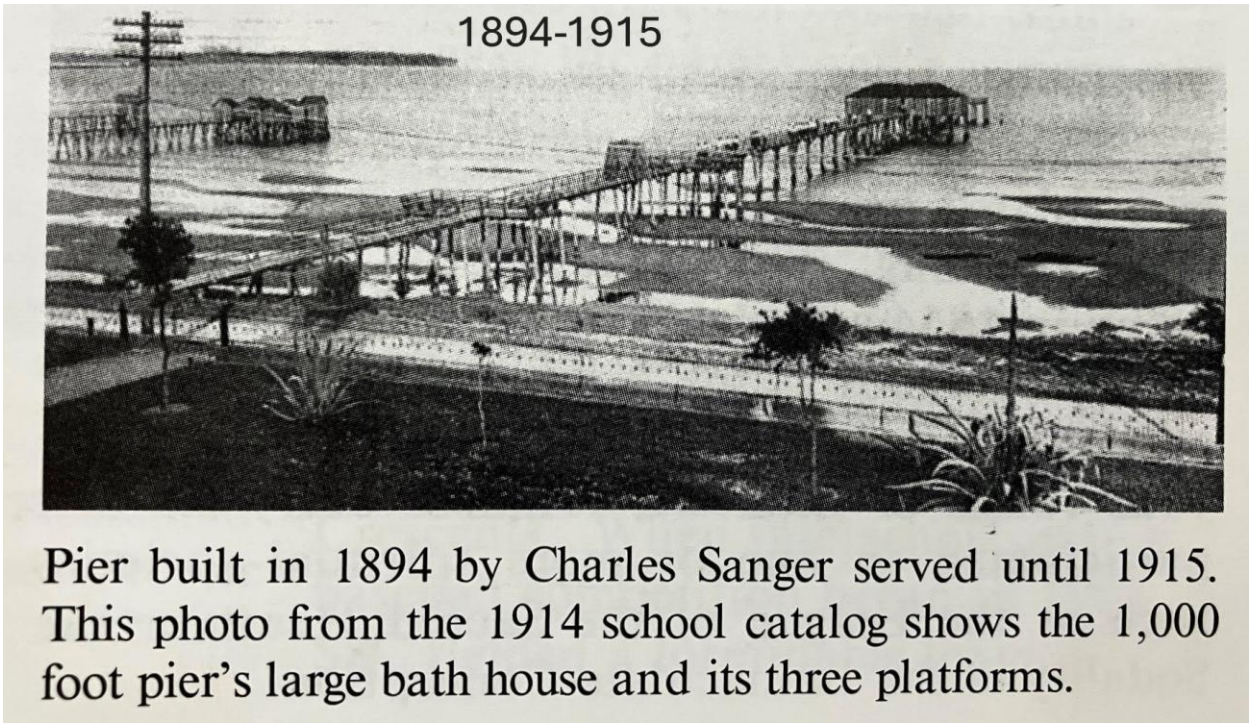
From its earliest days, St. Stanislaus College took full advantage of its location on the shores of St. Louis Bay by constructing a pier out over the water. An article in the first year of *The Sea Coast Echo* in 1892 noted that St. Stanislaus held concerts on its pier to entertain the people of Bay St. Louis.



—On Sunday evening the brass band of St Stanislaus' Collage delighted Bay St. Louisians with several selections played on the college pier.

Sea Coast Echo 5 Mar 1892

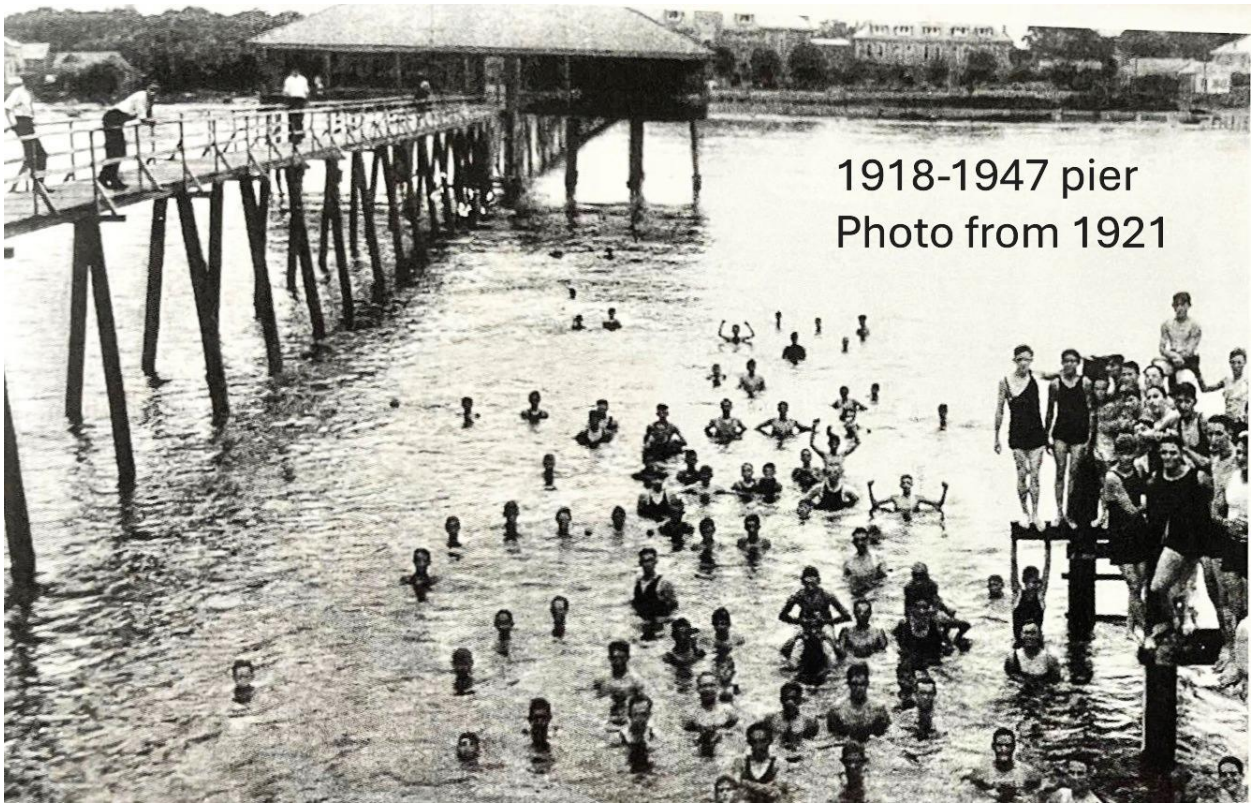
Of course, students used the pier for swimming and fishing as well as just relaxing and watching the boats and trains go by. In 1894, the college hired Charles Sanger, a local contractor, to build a substantial 1,000-foot pier with a large bath house and three platforms.



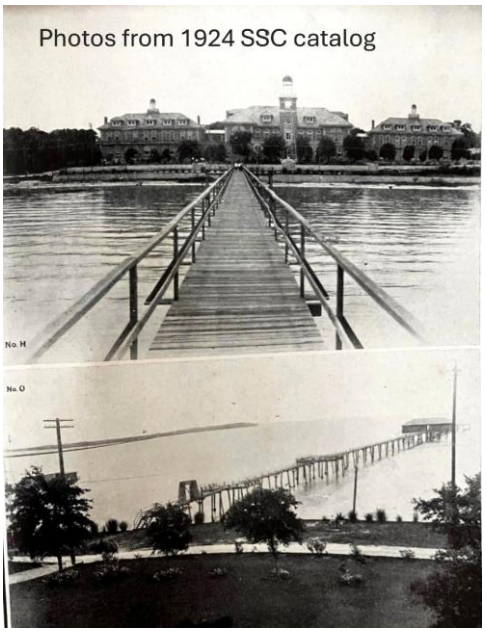
Pier built in 1894 by Charles Sanger served until 1915. This photo from the 1914 school catalog shows the 1,000 foot pier's large bath house and its three platforms.

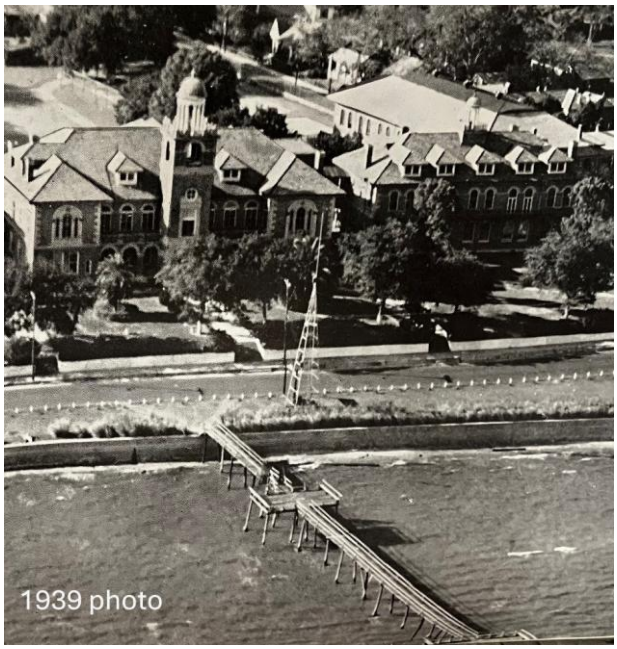
In the early 1900s, besides serving the students on a regular basis, this pier was used for special events such as Mardi Gras when the king arrived by boat and processed to the campus with great pomp while the band played. This pier made the news when Charles Sanger, who was hired to rebuild St. Stanislaus College after the fire of 1903, modified its large bathhouse to lodge out-of-town masons whom he employed to work on the construction of the three school buildings that stood until Hurricane Camille in 1969.

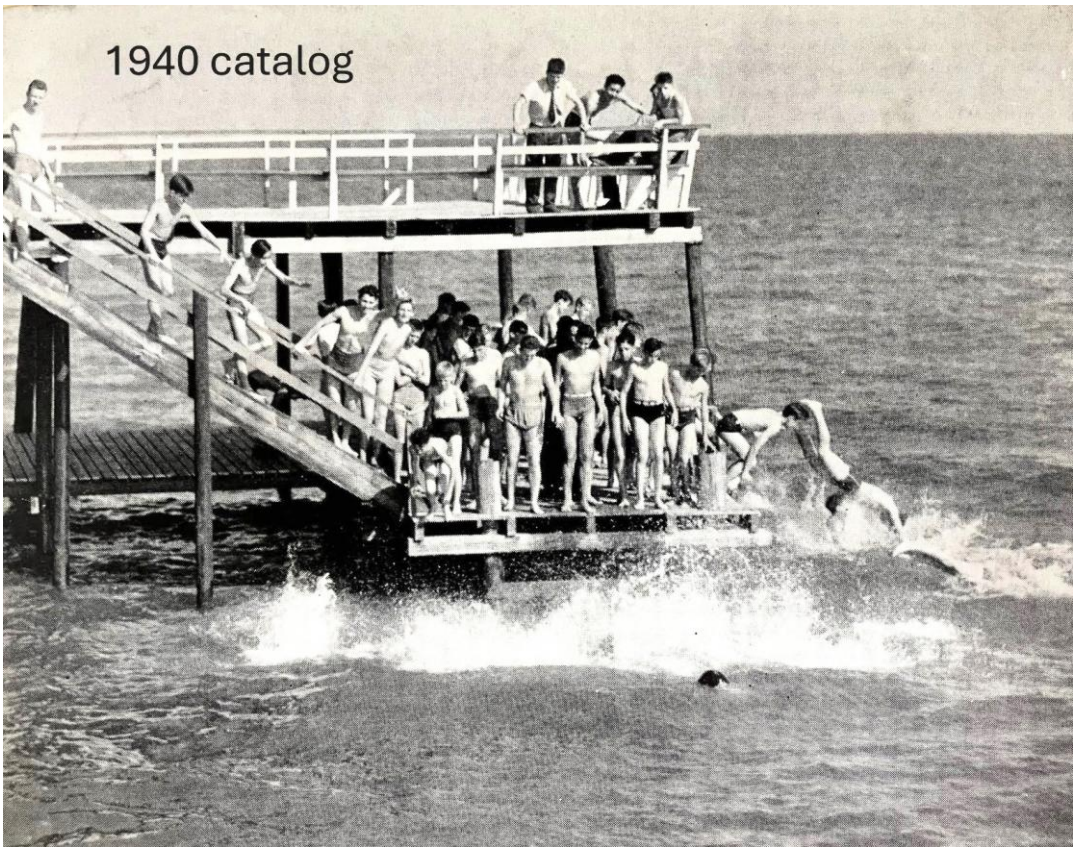
Right away after the hurricane of 1915 destroyed the famous pier, the school constructed another one almost identical with a large bathhouse and four platforms.



Frequent storms necessitated constant upkeep, repairs, and renovations, but St. Stanislaus always took care of its piers which since the 1928 played an integral role in Camp Stanislaus activities as well as those during the regular school year.



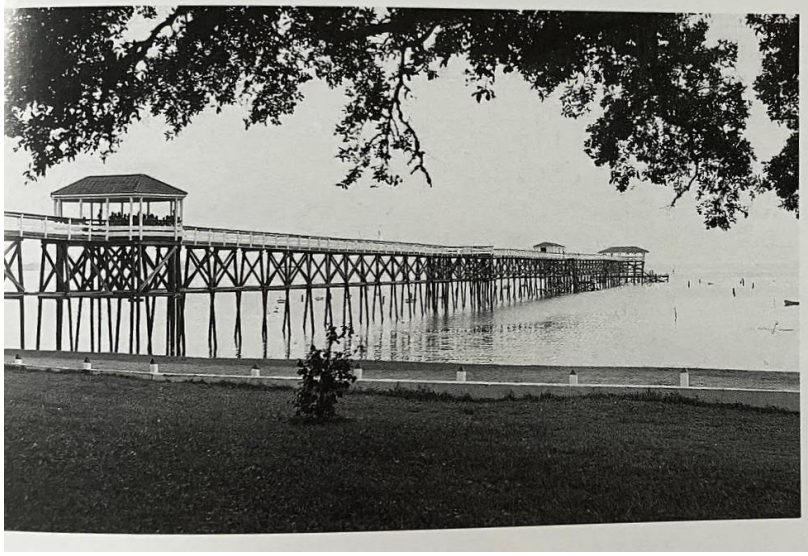



1940 catalog

1940 pier and rose garden

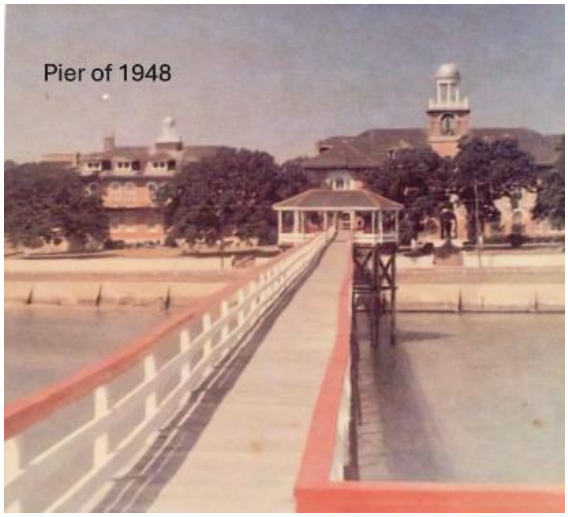
After the hurricane of 1947 destroyed its pier, the College spent $50,000 in 1948 to build a magnificent skyline pier starting in the school yard and ascending 14 feet over the beach road and 20 feet above the water. It featured two roofed pavilions, a bathhouse with hot and cold running water, a double platform at the end for swimming, and several diving boards.

1948-1969

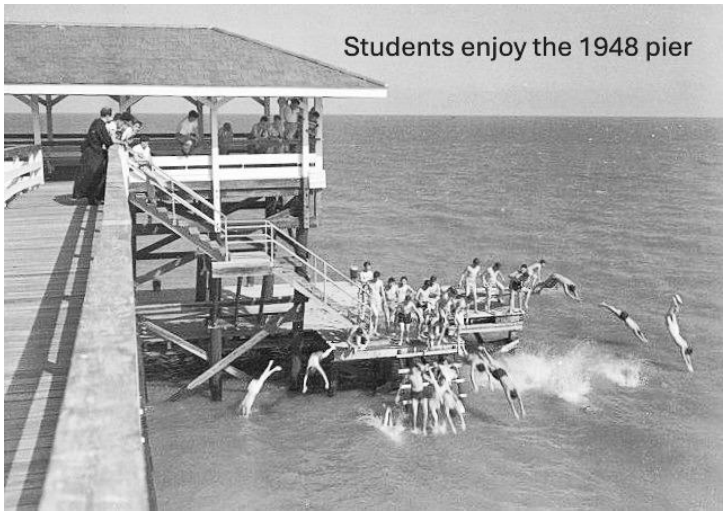


Magnificent Skyline Pier

In the summer of 1948, St. Stanislaus completed a $50,000 pier to replace the one demolished by the Hurricane of '47. The new skyline pier extended 1,082 feet, starting in the school yard and ascending 14 feet over the beach road and 20 feet above the water. Two roofed pavilions, a bathhouse with hot and cold running water, a double platform at the end for swimming, and several diving boards made the pier one of the finest along the coast. Because of its height, it withstood every storm until Hurricane Camille.



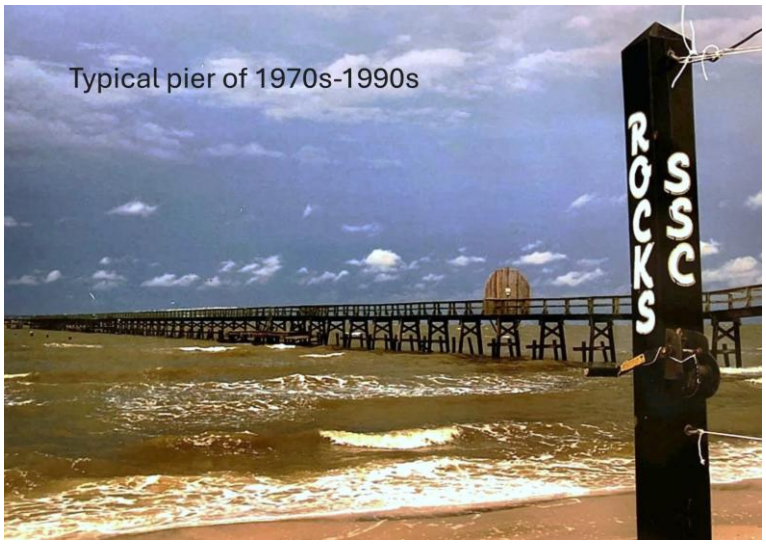
Pier of 1948



Students enjoy the 1948 pier

Often, people commented that the College had the best and finest pier on the coast. While the piers at St. Stanislaus differed somewhat over the years, most had several features in common. All stretched out more than one thousand feet to the deep water. Most had rails for protection, pavilions for protection from the sun, and landing platforms with ladders for easy access to the water. Some even had bathhouses with running water and electricity. The 1948 skyline pier with its red and white railings, its double decks, and its covered pavilions is the most memorable and is featured on several postcards.

After Hurricane Camille demolished the magnificent pier in 1969, the school used the insurance money from Lloyd's of London to construct an Olympic size swimming pool on campus in 1970. It then experimented over the next several decades with a variety of simpler types of piers built lower to the water and without covered pavilions. Some of these were designed to come apart in sections during a storm. Students and Brothers then scoured the beach after each storm to retrieve as much lumber as they could to repair the damage.



In 1996 for safety reasons, the school built a fenced-in bridge over South Beach Boulevard to connect with the pier. The overpass survived Hurricane Katrina in 2005, but the pier did not. The process of constantly rebuilding storm-damaged piers ended with Hurricane Katrina which led to a more structurally substantial pier. With significant financial assistance from FEMA, St. Stanislaus constructed the present pier which was completed in 2008. Like all of its predecessors, it is more than 1,000 feet long. It rises fourteen above the water and is eight feet wide. It has three pavilions and running water. Thus, the saga of St. Stanislaus and it famous piers continues to the present day and hopefully well into the future.

Brother Xavier Werneth, SSC Archivist, June 2025